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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
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Agenda item 3 (b)
Special theme: Millennium Development Goals and indigenous peoples: Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals: "Achieve universal primary education", to be addressed under the thematic approaches of language, cultural perspectives and traditional knowledge

Draft recommendations submitted by the Rapporteur

1. In approaching Millennium Development Goal 2, "Achieve universal primary education: ensure that all boys and girls complete primary school", especially for indigenous children, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues recalls the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, the International Charter of Traditional Games and Sports and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention against Discrimination in Education;

2. The Forum also recalls the Dakar Framework for Action, "Education for all: meeting our collective commitments", especially regarding indigenous children and in particular girls;

3. The Forum takes note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people to the Commission on Human Rights submitted in 2005 (E/CN.4/2005/88), the report of a seminar on education and indigenous peoples organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNESCO held in Paris (E/CN.4/2005/88/Add.4), on a workshop on higher education and indigenous peoples held in Costa Rica in 1999 (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1999/5) and the minimum standards for education in emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergency, and underlines that their recommendations should be promoted through good practices throughout the United Nations system and broadly to all Member States;

4. Furthermore, the Forum expresses its conviction that Governments should adopt special measures to achieve equitable educational outcomes for indigenous

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children, especially indigenous girls, and that special emphasis is required for headstart and early childhood programmes for indigenous children;

5. The Forum wishes to draw particular attention to a number of recommendations made at its first, second and third sessions that are of particular relevance for Millennium Development Goal 2.[1]

Access to primary education

6. The Forum recognizes that:

(a) The right to education is a key instrument for achieving equitable development and respect for cultural diversity. Education is an investment in the future, a means to reduce poverty and counter discrimination;

(b) Indigenous peoples have the right, including treaty rights (as relevant) to quality primary education that is sensitive to their holistic worldviews, languages, traditional knowledge and other aspects of their cultures, which contribute to human dignity, identity and intercultural dialogue;

(c) Mother-tongue mediated bilingual education is indispensable for effective learning for indigenous children and for the reduction of dropout rates;

(d) Any efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goal 2 are likely to fail if impartial and effective implementation of culturally sensitive educational programmes, curricula and actions addressing the needs of indigenous peoples are not undertaken;

(e) Indigenous children experience particular difficulties relating to access to education of quality and sociocultural relevance at all levels. Obstacles are numerous and complex and include, among others, distance to schools, differences in lifestyles, for example, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, discrimination, violence, extreme poverty and exclusion;

(f) Education can be one of the most important tools for combating prejudice and discrimination. National curricula frequently ignore the cultures, histories and spiritual values of indigenous peoples and reinforce stereotypes;

(g) In many cases, current criteria to measure the achievement of Goal 2 regarding indigenous education are absent or are based on insufficient indicators which do not reflect indigenous educational specificities and are culturally inappropriate and insensitive.

Recommendations to Member States

7. States should:

(a) Endorse intercultural education as national policy priority to ensure equal access for indigenous children to quality and culturally appropriate primary education, as stipulated in the Convention on the Right of the Child;

(b) Increase substantially State budgetary allocations in order to meet Millennium Development Goal 2 for indigenous children;

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[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 23* (E/2002/43), para. 26; ibid., *2003, Supplement No. 23* (E/2003/43), relevant chapters on indigenous children and youth and education, paras. 4-25, 106, 111 and 113; and ibid., *2004, Supplement No. 23* (E/2004/43), paras. 19 and 20.

(c) Increase funding for Goal 2 for indigenous children through bilateral and multilateral cooperation;

(d) Review current national curricula and textbooks to erase culturally discriminatory materials and enhance knowledge of indigenous cultures;

(e) Establish effective arrangements for the participation of indigenous parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of education services for their children, including in the designing and implementation of their own education at all levels, including developing appropriate teaching materials and methods;

(f) Ensure an increase in the number of indigenous persons in the educational sectors, including in policy, administration, teaching indigenous culture, history and contemporary society, indigenous languages and production of educational materials;

(g) Ensure that indigenous children have access to free primary quality education;

(h) Eliminate national policies and practices that create further difficulties for indigenous children to enjoy their right to education, such as the request for birth certificates for the enrolment of children and the refusal to accept indigenous names and traditional dress in schools;

(i) Develop bilingual and culturally appropriate primary education for indigenous children to reduce dropout rates. The mother tongue must be the first learning language and the national language the second language; curricula should reflect indigenous peoples' holistic worldviews, knowledge systems, histories, spiritual values and physical activities, physical education and sports;

(j) Recognize that isolation is a major obstacle that presents indigenous peoples from fully enjoying their right to education. States should establish best practices, such as residential or boarding schools, where they have worked positively, and mobile and seasonal schools or the use of technologies, such as remote teaching and the Internet, to reach the most isolated and remote indigenous communities;

(k) Support enrolment of indigenous persons in teacher-training programmes, colleges and relevant higher educational institutions;

(l) Develop school curricula for indigenous peoples in cooperation with other Governments at the regional level in order to maximize the sustainable use of resources in this area;

(m) Develop monitoring guidelines and indicators for achieving Goal 2 regarding indigenous children and set benchmarks in that regard.

Recommendations to the United Nations system

8. The Forum notes that the Fifth World Indigenous Education Conference will be held in New Zealand in November and December 2005, and urges UNESCO to seek to be actively involved in this conference, in particular in dissemination of information on UNESCO projects, programmes and activities relating to indigenous education and relevant to UNESCO responsibilities in pursuing Millennium Development Goal 2;

9. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and other agencies should continue to support, in cooperation with indigenous peoples, intercultural and bilingual education programmes and to promote in particular the right to education, with emphasis on indigenous children; direct financial assistance to indigenous educational institutions should be considered;

10. UNESCO should provide technical assistance for the elaboration of national and regional programmes and projects on developing culturally relevant curricula and educational materials as well as pedagogy to improve the access to and quality of indigenous education in all countries with indigenous peoples;

11. UNESCO and UNICEF should continue to promote bilingual and cross-cultural education programmes for indigenous peoples and schools for girls and women's literacy programmes in Latin America, and should encourage and expand these experiences in other regions;

12. UNICEF is invited to report to the Forum at its fifth session on the result of the "25 by 2005" initiative on maximizing indigenous girls' education programmes;

13. The Special Rapporteur on human rights and fundamental freedom of indigenous people and the Special Rapporteur on the right to education are invited to work with the Forum and other United Nations agencies to promote and monitor the realization of indigenous peoples' rights to quality and culturally appropriate education, including treaty rights to education;

14. United Nations agencies involved in data-collection processes regarding the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 2 should develop indicators relevant for indigenous peoples that capture their specificities including languages, culture, values and worldviews.

To indigenous peoples

15. Indigenous communities and organizations are urged to:

(a) Establish effective arrangements for the participation of indigenous parents and community members in decision-making regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of education services for their children;

(b) Actively participate in the monitoring of progress towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 2;

(c) Improve the coordination between indigenous and teachers' organizations to assess curricula gaps and improve teacher-training modules on indigenous needs.

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16. The Forum invites indigenous peoples, States and relevant organizations of the United Nations system to share experiences on education that represent best practices at the primary or community levels, based on indigenous cultures and traditions. The outcome of such discussions should be published and disseminated widely.